

first, I'm going to have to ask for your indulgence. I'd like to substitute an amendment because the one that you're about to vote on at page 1879 did not presume the passage of the Smith-Johanns amendment. So I quickly had my aide redraft the amendment so it would, in effect, supplement the Smith-Johanns amendment to do exactly what it represented would be done, and that is that if you support this amendment, first, I have to ask leave to substitute. Do I have leave to substitute?

SPEAKER BARRETT: Are there any objections.

SENATOR V. JOHNSON: There is certainly. Thank you, all right. Now...when the Clerk rolls his eyeballs I always think about a pay cut, but anyhow...this amendment, if passed, would increase the statutory allowance for our parents and children from \$293 a month, which is the current statute, to \$300 a month. It would not...it would leave alone the current statutory allowance of \$71 a month for each additional child. That would not be affected. This amendment, incidentally, if we appropriate to the level, would not cost but an additional 450,000 for the half year and about 900,000 for the full year. I gave you figures a few minutes ago that were higher than that, but the figures that I gave you a few minutes ago were taking us from a \$280 figure to a \$300 figure. We've already gone from 280 to 293 in the appropriations bill, so I have to scale it back. If we appropriate to this level which we will have a chance to vote on with the A bill, with the A bill, it will be an additional 450,000 for the half year and 900,000 for the full year, but this first step is to simply set the statutory maximum at \$300, thereby increasing it from the current level of \$293, that is the current statutory maximum. Now, in fact, if we appropriate to the level, then we will have effected about a 7.1 percent increase from the current payment level of 280 to \$300. I'd been asked by a lobbyist to point out, and it's an important thing consideration, to point this out to you. Foster care payments are absolutely dependent on what our statutory payment levels are. Our current foster care payment for somebody who takes care of someone else's child is \$210 a month. That is our current foster care payment. If, in fact, we go from 280 to 293 then the foster care payment should increase from 210 to 223. There should be a \$13 increase. If we go from 280 to 300 then the foster care payment should go from 210 to 230. But you stop and think about that. We're asking people in our state to take care of other people's children because other people are in a bad fix and we're giving them all of \$210 a month to do that.